Veterans Affairs Canada

Annual Report on the Administration of the *Access to Information Act*

April 1, 2011 – March 31, 2012

The Honourable Steven Blaney, MP
Minister of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Affairs Canada | Anciens Combattants Canada

Canada

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1. INTRODUCTION

The *Access to Information Act* gives Canadian citizens and corporations the right to access federal government records, subject to certain exceptions. The *Act* complements but does not replace other methods for obtaining government information. It does not limit in any way the access to government information that is normally available to the public upon request.

This report describes how Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) including the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman (OVO) fulfilled its responsibilities concerning the *Access to Information Act* during the fiscal year beginning April 1, 2011, and ending March 31, 2012. Under section 72 of the *Access to Information Act*, the Minister of VAC, as head of the institution, is required submit an annual report to Parliament on the administration of the *Act*.

Veterans Affairs Canada

Canada's development as an independent country with a unique identity stems in no small measure from its achievements in times of war. A good part of our modern identity is also associated with pride in Canada's enviable peacekeeping record. Canada's contribution to global peace and security, both as ally and peacekeeping partner, has come at a heavy price in terms of lives sacrificed, health forfeited and hopes unfulfilled. The Department exists to repay the nation's debt of gratitude toward those whose courageous efforts have given us this legacy, and have contributed to our growth as a nation.

Veterans Affairs Canada's mandate stems from laws, regulations and Orders in Council. Among the more significant is the *Department of Veterans Affairs Act*, which charges the Minister of Veterans Affairs with the following responsibilities:

> ... the care, treatment, or re-establishment in civil life of any person who served in the Canadian Forces of merchant navy or in the naval, army or air forces or merchant navies of Her Majesty, of any person who has otherwise engaged in pursuits relating to war, and of any other person designated . . . and the care of the dependents or survivors of any person referred to . . .

Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) provides services to a highly diverse clientele which reflects the remarkable breadth of Canada's contributions to world peace. This includes:

Veterans:

- Armed Forces and Merchant Navy Veterans who served during the World Wars or the Korean War;
- Former and, in certain cases, current members of the Canadian Forces, including those who served in Special Duty Areas and in peacekeeping; and
- Allied Veterans who lived in Canada prior to periods of war.

Other Clients:

- Certain civilians who are entitled to benefits because of their war time services;
- Former and, in certain cases, serving members of the Royal Canadian Mounted

Police (RCMP); and
- Survivors and dependants of the foregoing groups.

In addition to serving these clients, VAC receives many requests for information from members of the public. Employees assist those who approach the Department with requests for information on our programs, services and activities. VAC joins with all Canadians in recognizing the sacrifices and achievements of those who have served in the cause of peace and freedom around the world over the years.

VAC remains strongly committed to upholding the principles of the *Access to Information Act*, while providing a high level of service to those who serve.

The Office of the Veterans Ombudsman

The Office of the Veterans Ombudsman works to ensure stakeholders of the Office are treated with respect in accordance with the *Veterans Bill of Rights*, and receive the services and benefits that they require in a fair, timely and efficient manner.

The Office of the Veterans Ombudsman stands ready to help members of the Veterans community, serving members of the Canadian Forces and the RCMP, and other clients of Veterans Affairs Canada:

- Veterans of the Second World War and the Korean War
- Veterans of the Canadian Forces (Regular Force and Reservists)
- Serving members of the Canadian Forces
- Veterans of the RCMP
- Members of the RCMP
- Immediate family members and caregivers of any of the above-mentioned groups
- Survivors of Veterans of the First World War
- Former members of the Canadian Forces who did not complete basic training, and who have service-related medical conditions.

The Office addresses complaints, emerging and systemic issues related to programs and services provided or administered by the Veterans Affairs Canada, as well as systemic issues related to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board.

The Office plays an important role in broadening awareness of the needs of Veterans and of the contributions they continue to make to Canadian society when they return to civilian life.

2. ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COORDINATOR'S OFFICE

The Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP) Coordinator acts on behalf of the Minister of Veterans Affairs, the Deputy Minister and the Veterans Ombudsman to ensure that the Department's responsibilities under the *Access to Information Act* and the *Privacy Act* are met. To this end, the ATIP Coordinator is responsible for the development, coordination and implementation of effective policies, guidelines, systems and procedures related to ATIP. Such policies and procedures enable the appropriate processing and disclosure of information.

Prior to September 2011, the functions of the ATIP Coordinator at VAC were combined under the responsibilities of the Director of Information Management. Having these roles combined allowed the Department to take advantage of a center of expertise on information management, privacy and access to information. While this proved successful, the increase workload and management challenges in both IM and ATIP required that the roles be separated to strengthen focus on these areas. In September 2011, a new Director position was created to focus solely on the *Access to Information Act* and the *Privacy Act*. The ATIP Coordinator reports directly to the Assistant Deputy Minister, Human Resources and Corporate Services Branch.

The mandate of the ATIP Coordinator's Office within VAC is to administer the *Access to Information Act* and the *Privacy Act*, and to facilitate institutional compliance with legislative and central agency requirements. The main activities of the ATIP Coordinator's Office include:

- Processing requests for information submitted under the *Access to Information Act* and the *Privacy Act* in compliance with ATIP legislation, regulations and Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) policies and guidelines;
- Developing policies, procedures and guidelines in support of Access to Information and Privacy legislation;
- Promoting awareness of both *Acts* within the Department to ensure that employees understand their roles and responsibilities;
- Monitoring departmental compliance with both Acts, and maintaining regulations and relevant procedures and policies;
- Preparing annual reports to Parliament and other statutory reports, and other material that may be required by central agencies;
- Completing and coordinating Privacy Impact Assessments (PIAs) and PIA Needs Determination Templates;
- Coordinating the resolution of any complaints against VAC made to the Information Commissioner under the *Access to Information Act* and to the Privacy Commissioner under the *Privacy Act*;
- Supporting the Department in meeting its commitments to openness and transparency through proactive disclosure of information and the release of information via informal avenues.

Processing of formal and informal requests is centralized within the ATIP Coordinator's Office in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. The Coordinator's Office consists of a Coordinator and a complement of 19 full-time employees who are divided into four teams. Two of the four teams, which account for a total of 13 ATIP Officers, are responsible for processing requests. A third team of three Senior Officers provides ATIP policy support and advice as well as ATIP training

and awareness activities for the Department. The fourth and final team consists of one manager and three clerks that provide infrastructure support to the Coordinator and all teams. In addition to this core group, the Office of the Ombudsman has dedicated three employees part-time to *Access to Information Act* and *Privacy Act* activities.

The ATIP Coordinator's Office supports and maintains a network of 28 ATIP Liaison Officers in each major division and region of the Department: 20 liaison officers in the Charlottetown Head Office and 8 in the Regional Offices. The liaison officers are responsible for retrieving information from the Office of Primary Interest (OPI) when a request is received. Liaison officers are also responsible for identifying information which may qualify for an exemption under the Acts.

3. DESIGNATION ORDER

The responsibilities associated with the administration of the *Access to Information Act*, such as notifying applicants of extensions and transferring requests to other institutions, are designated to the departmental ATIP Coordinator through a delegation instrument signed by the Minister of Veterans Affairs.

Over the course of the fiscal year 2011-2012, the Department completed a review of the ATIP delegation orders. The revised delegation orders are in place for fiscal year 2012-2013. It is expected that the revised delegation orders will permits greater coordination of all *Access to Information Act (ATIA) and Privacy Act (PA)* requests across the Department including the OVO.

The delegation that is presented below was in place for the duration of fiscal year 2011-2012.

***ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT* DESIGNATION ORDER**

The Minister of Veterans Affairs, pursuant to section 73 of the *Access to Information Act*, hereby designates the persons holding the positions in the Department of Veterans Affairs set out in the schedule attached hereto, to exercise the powers and perform the duties and functions of the Minister as the head of a government institution under the sections of the Act set out in the schedule opposite the positions.

Dated at Ottawa, this day of 2009

Minister of Veterans Affairs

Dated: May 26, 2009

4. *ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT* DESIGNATION SCHEDULE			
	HEAD OF THE INSTITUTION	MINISTER OF VETERANS AFFAIRS	
Sections of the ATI Act	Powers, Duties or Functions	Institutions and Titles	
		DVA	
73	All powers, duties or functions of the head of the institution	Deputy Minister	
21	Approve exemptions	ADM, Corporate Services	Veterans Ombudsman
14; 15; 18	Approve exemptions	ADMs	Veterans Ombudsman
67.1	Obstructing Right of Access	Department of Veterans Affairs Security Officer	
7(*a*)	Give notices re: access to records within 30 days	ATIP Coordinator / Deputy Coordinator / Officer	OVO -Legal Advisor
8(1)	Transfer requests and material to other institutions	ATIP Coordinator / Deputy Coordinator / Officer	OVO -Legal Advisor
9(1)(*a*)(*b*)	Extension of time limits	ATIP Coordinator / Deputy Coordinator	OVO -Legal Advisor
9(2)	Give notice of time extensions to Information Commissioner	ATIP Coordinator / Deputy Coordinator	OVO -Legal Advisor
11(2)(3)(4)(5)(6)	Payment or waiver of fees	ATIP Coordinator / Deputy Coordinator / Officer	OVO -Legal Advisor
12(2)(3)	Language of access and alternate format	ATIP Coordinator / Deputy Coordinator / Officer	OVO -Legal Advisor
13; 16; 17; 19; 20; 22; 23; 24; 25; 26	Approve exemptions	ATIP Coordinator / Deputy Coordinator	OVO -Legal Advisor
19; 23	Approve exemptions	ATIP Officer	
27(1)(4); 28(1)(2)(4); 29(1); 33; 35(2); 37(4); 43(1); 44(2); 52; 69; 71(2)	Apply third party procedures and give notes	ATIP Coordinator / Deputy Coordinator	OVO -Legal Advisor
72(1)	Prepare annual report to Parliament	ATIP Coordinator / Deputy Coordinator	

LEGEND:

VAC: Veterans Affairs Canada

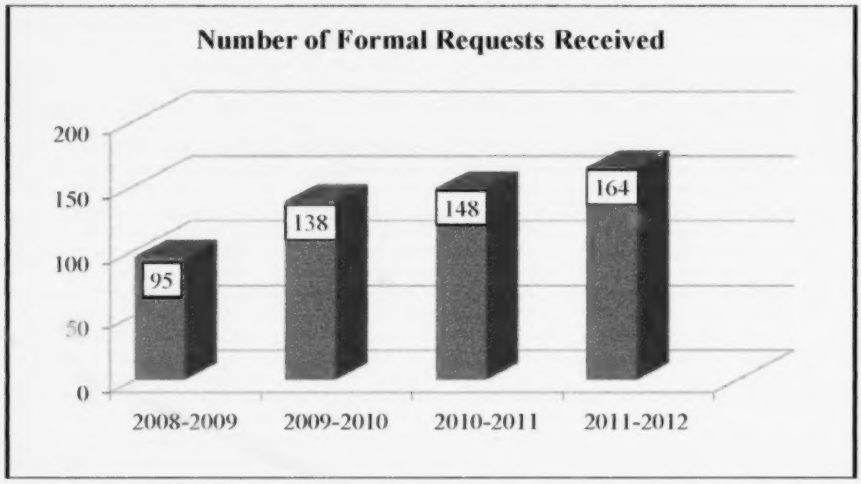
OVO: Office of the Veterans Ombudsman

5. INTERPRETATION OF THE STATISTICAL REPORT ON THE *ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT*

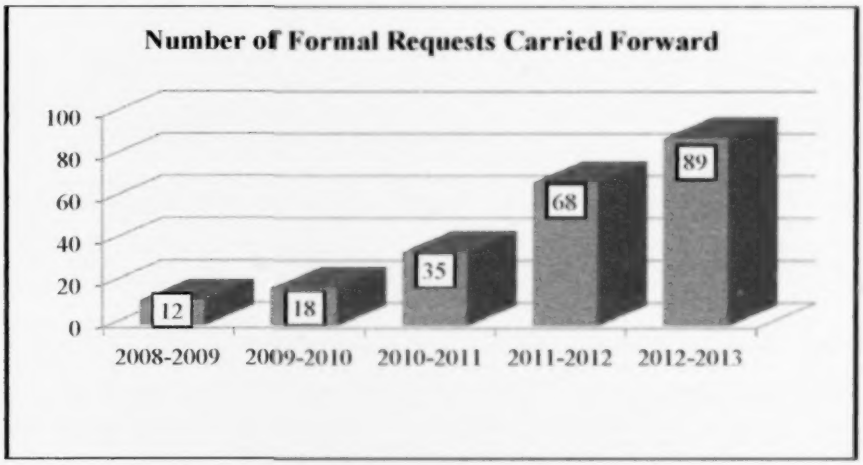
The Statistical Report on the *Access to Information Act*, included in Annex 1, provides a summary of formal *Access to Information Act* applications processed by VAC between April 1, 2011, and March 31, 2012. With the exception of requests received and requests carried over, the statistics presented below are for requests that were closed during the reporting period. The following narrative provides explanations and interpretations of the statistical data.

1 FORMAL REQUESTS UNDER THE *ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT*

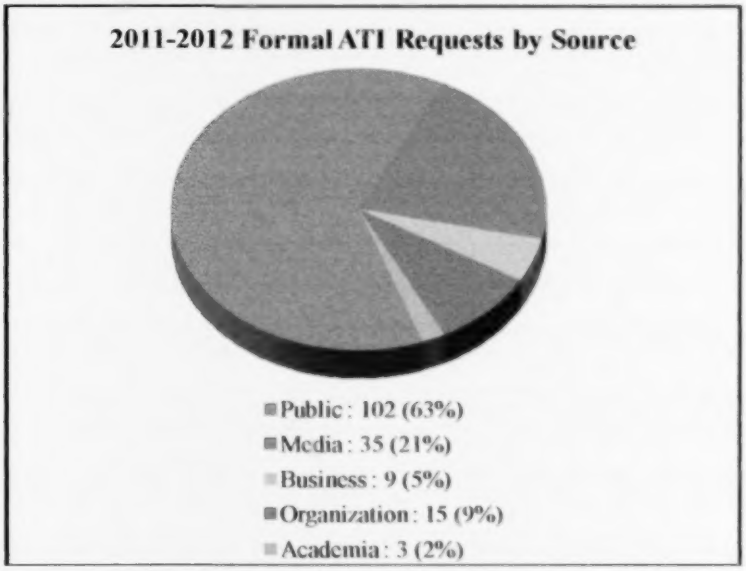
Between April 1, 2011 and March 31, 2012, VAC received 164 formal requests for information under the *Access to Information Act*. This represents an increase of 16 requests (or 11 per cent) from the 2010-2011 fiscal year; a 19 per cent increase as compared to the 2009-2010 fiscal year; and a 73 per cent increase as compared to the 2008-2009 fiscal year.



These 164 requests, combined with 68 outstanding requests from the 2010-2011 period totalled 232 requests requiring action in the 2011-2012 reporting period. This is a significant increase when compared to the previous reporting periods. At the end of 2009-2010, the ATIP office only carried forward 35 requests for a total of 185 requests requiring action for 2010-2011. At the end of the current reporting period, there are eighty-nine (89) outstanding formal requests that have been carried forward into the 2012-2013 fiscal year. As evidenced by these statistics, the number of requests carried forward illustrates the continued challenge that the Department is facing to address the initial increases in requests received since 2008-2009.

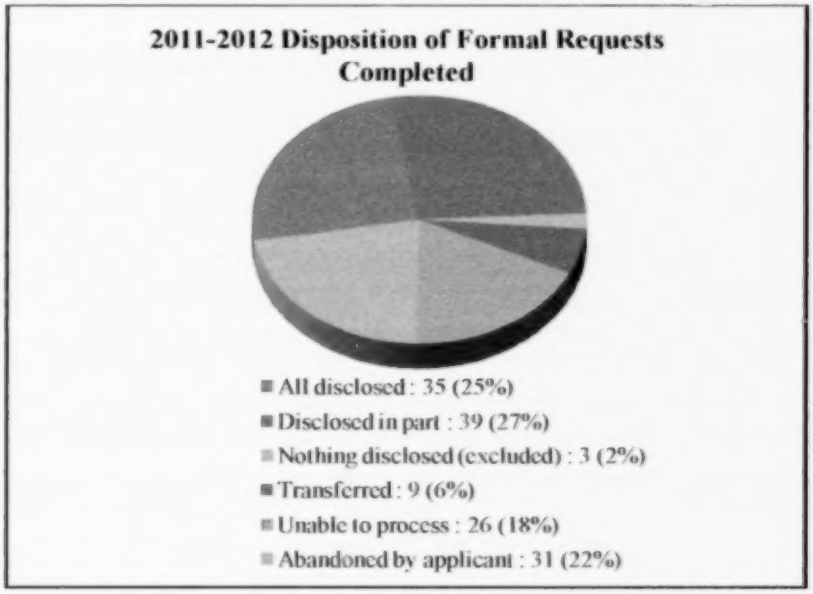


The breakdown of the 164 requests received during the 2011-2012 fiscal year is as follows:



II DISPOSITION OF FORMAL REQUESTS COMPLETED

In total, 143 requests were completed during the reporting period. The disposition of the 143 requests completed in 2011-2012 is as follows:


2011-2012 Disposition of Formal Requests Completed
All disclosed : 35 (25%)
Disclosed in part : 39 (27%)
Nothing disclosed (excluded) : 3 (2%)
Transferred : 9 (6%)
Unable to process : 26 (18%)
Abandoned by applicant : 31 (22%)

Requests where records did not exist were recorded in the "unable to process" category. This category decreased by 13 per cent when compared to 2010-2011.

The following chart compares the number of pages reviewed and released for formal requests during the past three reporting periods. Pages with portions of information released, but with exemptions applied, are counted under "pages released".

Period	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	Variance 2011-2012 over 2010-2011
Pages Reviewed	7,710	8,360	26,140	213%
Pages Released	5,545	4,635	16,029	246%

One hundred and forty-three (143) formal requests were completed over the fiscal year, as compared to 114 requests completed in the 2011-2012 fiscal year. This is a 25 per cent increase in the number of requests completed, or, as demonstrated in the table above, a 213 per cent increase in the number of pages reviewed.

As noted in the Statistical Report on the *Access to Information Act* in Annex 1, approximately one per cent of requests processed account for approximately 66 per cent of the total pages released during the reporting period. These statistics reveal that a small percentage of requests received account for the bulk of the workload of the VAC ATIP office. Such large volume requests demand considerable effort to process within the legislative timelines. This raises concerns with respect to equitable treatment of all requesters as a disproportionate number of resources are spent on processing a small number of requests compared to the overall number of requests received. This results in more requests being late, which in turn, increases the likelihood of complaints as described in section 13 of this report.

It is important to note that the Department has also witnessed an increasing number of clients that are filing requests for personal information under the *Access to Information Act* (ATIA). Even with the efforts by the Department to clarify the purpose of both the ATIA and the *Privacy Act* (PA), many requesters are opting to file their request under the ATIA or both. The increase use of ATIA for these purposes has required the Department devote some of its existing resources to processing such files. To reflect this activity, the department has assigned a larger percentage of its resource to administering the ATIA. This accounts for the increase in costs in administering the *Access to Information Act* that is reported in subsection X "*Costs*" of this section of the report.

III EXEMPTIONS CITED

This section of the statistical interpretation identifies the number of requests where specific types of exemptions have been invoked to protect sensitive information in government records.

VAC invoked 94 exemptions under sections 14, 16, 19, 20, 21, and 24. This is a 15 per cent decrease over the 2010-2011 reporting year. The most frequently used exemption was subsection 19(1) which is used to exempt personal information. For statistical purposes, it is important to note that the exemptions applied to a case multiple times, are counted only once per case.

Exemptions Invoked 2011-2012	**Cases**
Paragraph 14(*a*) (Federal-Provincial Consultations or Deliberations)	4
Subsection 16(2)(*c*) (Security)	2
Subsection 19(1) (Personal Information)	36
Paragraph 20(1)(*c*) (Competitive Process – Third Party)	2
Paragraph 21(1)(*a*) (Operations of Government – Advice)	15
Paragraph 21(1)(*b*) (Operations of Government – Consultations or Deliberations)	16
Paragraph 21(1)(*c*) (Operations of Government – Negotiations)	9
Section 23 (Solicitor-client privilege)	9
Section 24 (1) (Statutory prohibitions against disclosures)	1
Total Exemptions Invoked	**94**

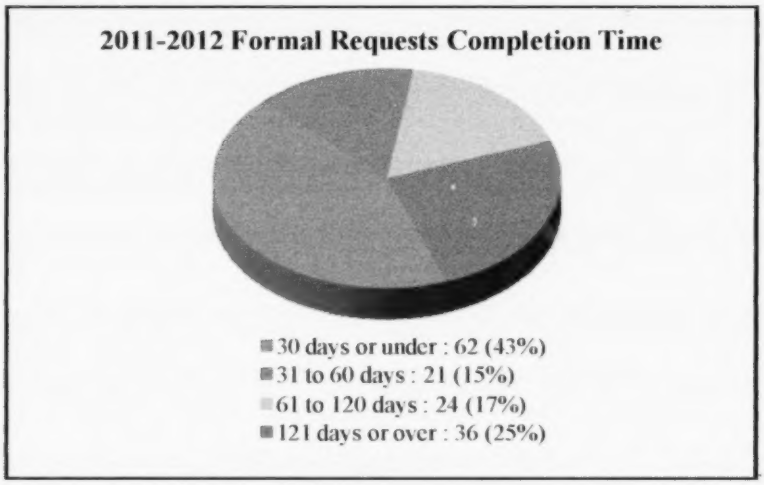
IV EXCLUSIONS CITED

Pursuant to sections 68 and 69, the *Access to Information Act* does not apply to published material, material available for purchase by the public, material placed in the Library and Archives of Canada or confidences of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada. During this reporting period, section 68 was invoked on 3 occasions and section 69 was invoked on 17 occasions. This is a 35 per cent decrease over the last reporting period.

Exclusions Cited 2011-2012	Occasions
68(a) – Published material or material available for purchase by the public	3
69(1)(e) – Briefings of Ministers	2
69(1)(g) re (a) – Cabinet Confidences	5
69(1)(g) re (c) – Cabinet Confidences	6
69 (1)(g) re (e) – Cabinet Confidences	4
Total	**20**

V COMPLETION TIME

During the 2011-2012 reporting period, VAC completed 62 formal requests in 30 days or under; for a total of 43 per cent successfully completed within the legislated time frame. Twenty-one (21) requests were completed within 31 to 60 days; 24 requests were completed within 61 to 120 days; and 36 requests requiring additional time and effort were completed in 121 days or over. This means, VAC closed 57 per cent of its formal requests past the statutory deadlines.



As noted in section 2.6.1 of the Statistical Report on the *Access to Information Act*, workload is identified as the principal reason for not meeting statutory deadlines. The increase in large volume requests is a growing trend that will continue to have an impact on the Department's ability to meet its legislative timelines.

VI EXTENSIONS

Section 9 of the *Access to Information Act* provides for the extension of the statutory time limits if consultations are necessary, or the request is for a large number of records and meeting the original time limit would unreasonably interfere with the operations of the Department.

During the reporting period a total of 17 requests were extended, and of these, 7 were extended for 30 days or under, and 10 requests required an extension of 31 days or over. All requests were extended due to consultations with other institutions.

Extensions 2011-2012		
	30 Days or Under	**31 Days or Over**
Searching	0	0
Consultation	7	10
Third Party	0	0
Total	**7**	**10**

During the reporting period, the number of extensions during this fiscal year decreased by 45 per cent from the 2010-2011 reporting period. The ATIP Office will make full use of available extensions in accordance with the *Act*.

VII TRANSLATIONS

There were no translations required to respond to access to information requests during the 2011-2012 reporting period.

VIII METHOD OF ACCESS

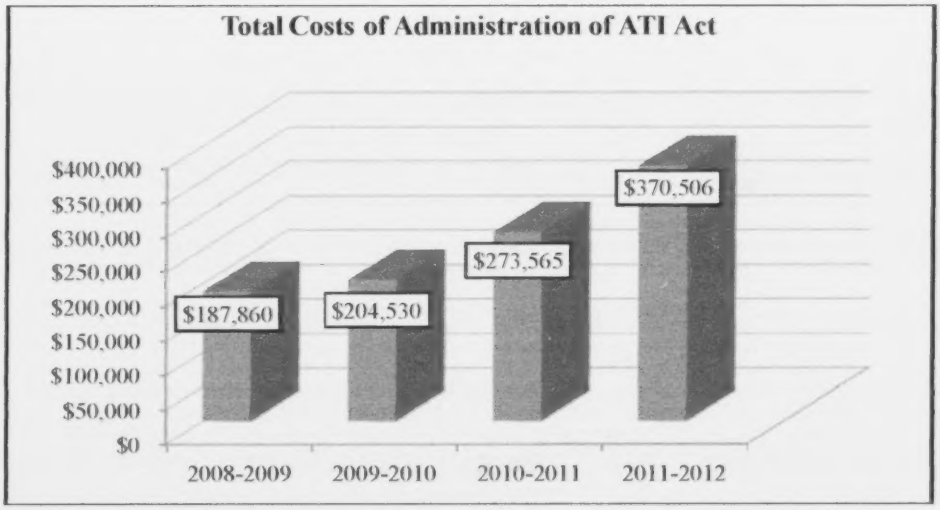
There are three methods of access whereby individuals may obtain the information they have requested. Requesters may receive copies of the material, examine the information during an arranged time or examine and receive copies of the information. Of the 143 formal requests completed, applicants received copies of the material they had requested fully or in part in 74 cases. In the remaining 69 cases, the requests were either abandoned by the applicant (31), could not be processed as records did not exist (26), were transferred to another institution (9), or were not disclosed due to exemptions or exclusions (3).

IX FEES

In accordance with section 11 of the *Access to Information Act*, the fees collected during the reporting period totaled $712. Of this amount, $545 was collected in compliance with the application fee required of the Act. $167 was collected to cover fees associated with searching for documents or preparing them and for the requests or with computer processing. There was no money collected for reproduction of the documents. During the same period, Veterans Affairs Canada waived fees totaling $171 for 24 requests.

X COSTS

VAC spent a total of $370,506 administering the *Access to Information Act* during the reporting period. Staff salaries accounted for $336,456 which is equivalent to approximately 5 full-time resources. Other administrative costs (representing operations and maintenance expenditures) amounted to $34,050.



There has been a 35 per cent increase in the total costs for administration of the *Access to Information Act* over the last reporting period and a 97 per cent increase over the past four periods. As previously noted, this can in part be attributed to a larger percentage of resources assigned to administering the ATIA.

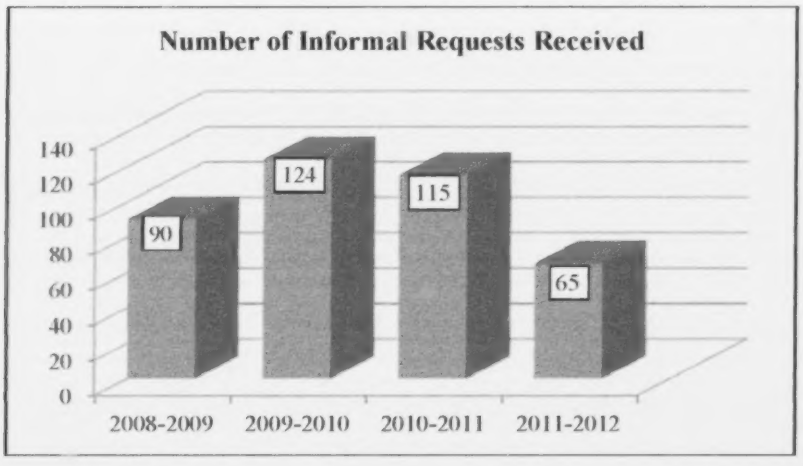
Note that the cost identified in the table are only related to costs directly related to the ATIP Office. The cost also include ATIP Office ressources devoted to processing informal requests for personal information as outlined in the following section. They do not include time spent on requests in various program areas within the Department.

6. STATISTICAL SUMMARY FOR INFORMAL REQUESTS

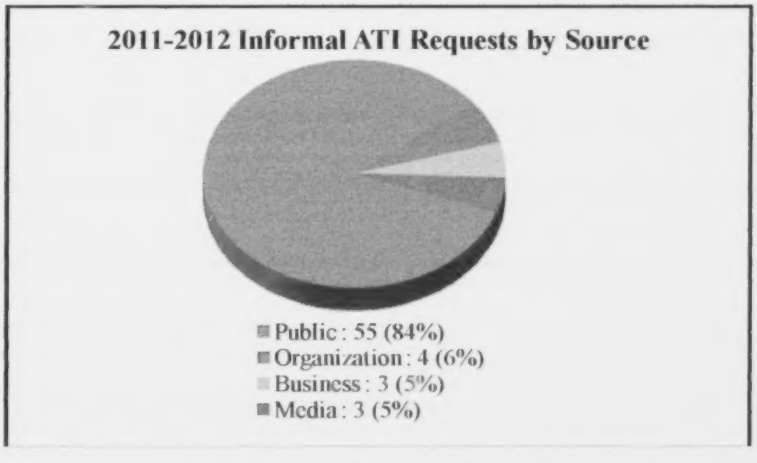
I INFORMAL ACCESS TO INFORMATION REQUESTS

In keeping with its commitment to quality client service and transparency, the ATIP Coordinator's Office continued to process informal Access to Information requests in 2011-2012. An informal request is one which does not invoke the right of access provided by the *Access to Information Act*. Sixty-five (65) requests, combined with 15 outstanding requests from the 2010-2011 period totaled 80 requests requiring processing this fiscal year, representing a 42 per cent decrease over the previous fiscal year.

Twenty-two (22) outstanding informal requests have been carried forward into the 2012-2013 fiscal year.



The breakdown of the 65 informal requests received during the 2011-2012 fiscal year is as follows:



II PAGES REVIEWED AND RELEASED FOR INFORMAL REQUESTS

The following chart compares pages reviewed and released for informal requests during the past three reporting periods.

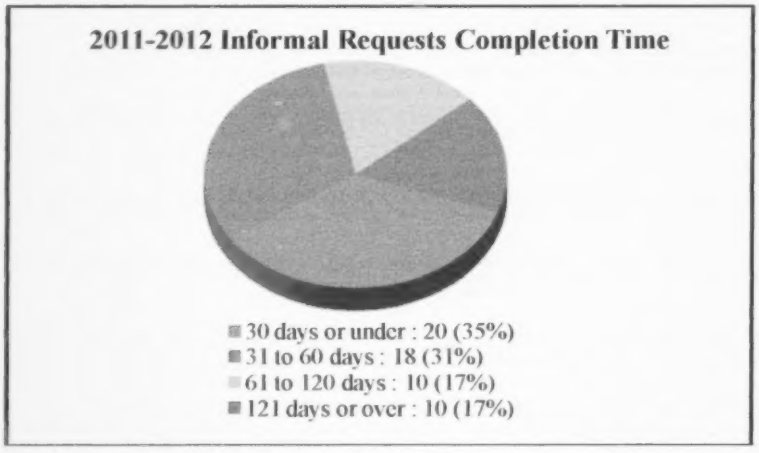
Period	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	Variance 2011-2012 over 2010-2011
Pages Reviewed	16,697	25,076	20,465	-18%
Pages Released	10,517	13,036	16,901	30%

Fifty-eight (58) informal requests were completed over the fiscal year, as compared to 123 requests completed in the 2010-2011 fiscal year. This is a 53 per cent decrease in the number of informal requests completed. The number of pages reviewed shows an 18 per cent decrease from last reporting period.

There is no legislated time frame set for informal requests within the *Access to Information Act;* however, 38 informal requests of 58 were completed within 60 days.

III COMPLETION TIME

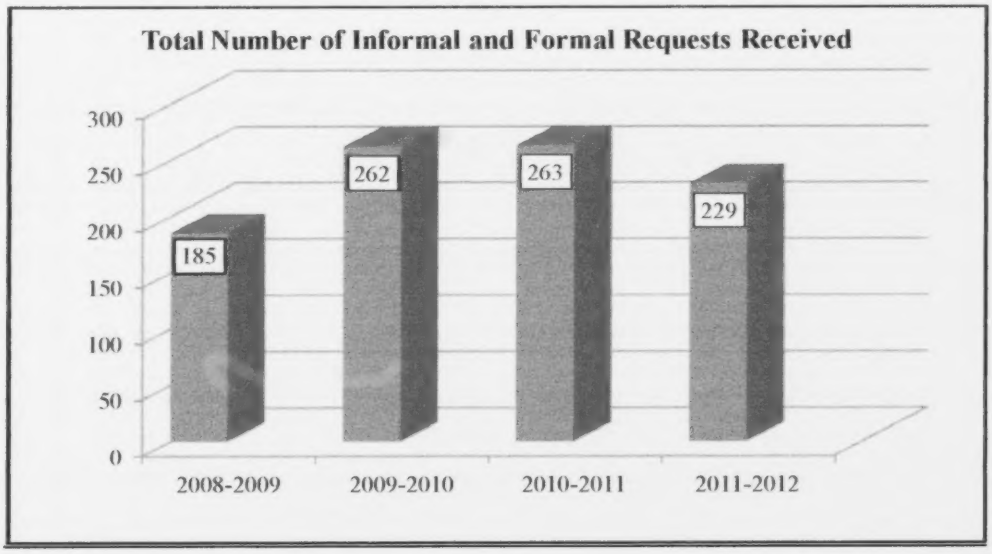
During the 2011-2012 reporting period, VAC completed 20 informal requests in 30 days or under; 18 requests were completed within 31 to 60 days; 10 requests were completed within 61 to 120 days; and 10 requests requiring additional time and effort were completed in 121 days or over.


2011-2012 Informal Requests Completion Time
30 days or under : 20 (35%)
31 to 60 days : 18 (31%)
61 to 120 days : 10 (17%)
121 days or over : 10 (17%)

The Department remains committed to process informal *Access to Information* requests in a timely fashion while balancing the legislated requirements under the formal requests process. Thirty-eight (38) informal requests of 58 (66 per cent) were completed within 60 days. Informal requests are generally for a smaller volume of records and are less complex to process as they require minimal severance.

7. STATISTICAL OVERVIEW FOR INFORMAL AND FORMAL REQUESTS

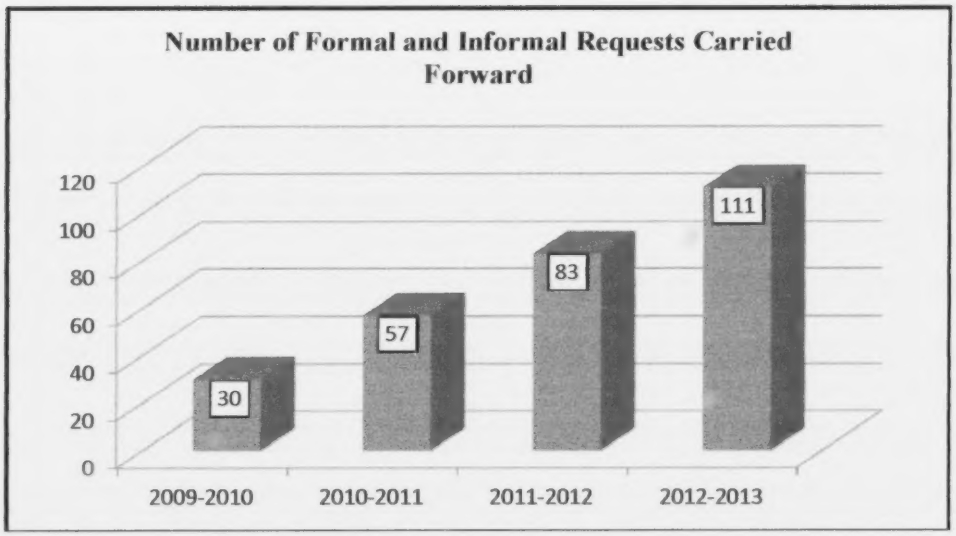
Between April 1, 2011, and March 31, 2012, VAC received informal and formal requests for information under the *Access to Information Act*.



The following chart compares pages reviewed and released for completed informal and formal and requests during the past three reporting periods.

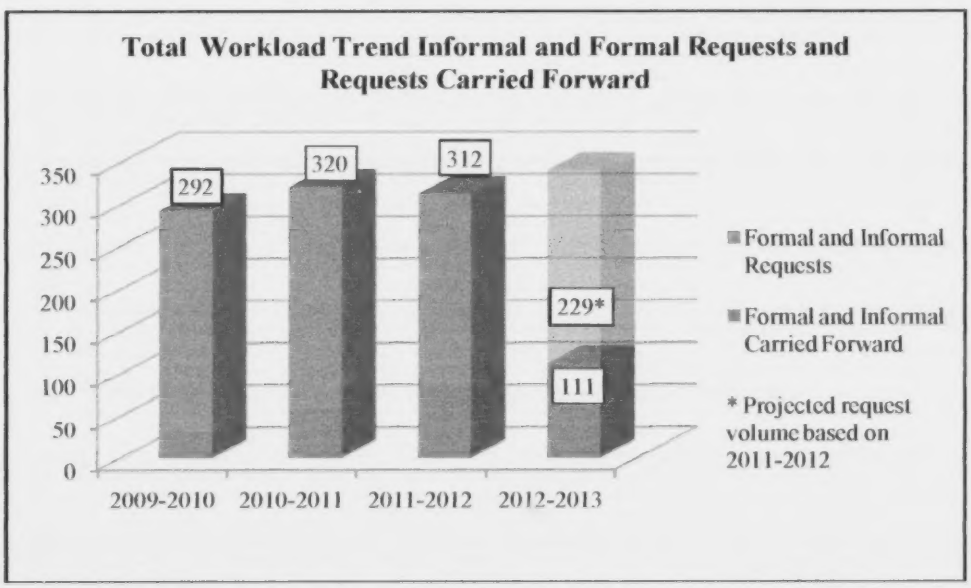
Period	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	Variance 2011-2012 over 2010-2011
Pages Reviewed	24,407	33,436	46,605	39%
Pages Released	16,062	17,671	32,930	86%

The following chart compares informal and formal requests that are carried forward for the past three reporting periods as well as the requests carried forward into fiscal year 2012-2013.



The above chart clearly demonstrates a steady increase in requests being carried forward from year to year. This is particularly pronounced in the number of informal and formal requests carried forward in fiscal year 2012-2013.

The following chart summarizes the total workload trend which includes completed informal requests, formal requests and all formal and informal requests that were carried forward.



The above chart identifies that while the number of informal and formal requests have general stabilized, the growing number of requests carried forward is resulting in increased overall workload for the office. The chart also identifies that this issue has been growing slowly over the past three years.

8. CONSULTATIONS

VAC received 49 requests for consultations from other departments during the 2011-2012 period. These requests, combined with one request carried over from the previous period, amounted to 50 consultations requiring time and attention. 46 of these requests (2,063 pages reviewed) were completed this period.

9. ATIP STRATEGY FOR ADDRESSING WORKLOAD

To address the current workload challenges, Veterans Affairs will be focussing on the following management strategies:

Maintain senior management oversight on workload and complaints

- The ATIP Office will work through existing governance committees within the Department to ensure that senior management is periodically briefed on progress in addressing workload. This includes ensuring that the ATIP Management Dashboard is up-to-date and regularly communicated to Senior Management Committee and Departmental Privacy Committee members.

Increase communication with requesters

- Increase efforts to clarify requests with applicant to outline the benefits of narrowing scope of their requests in terms of increase timeliness of responses. Also, the ATIP Office will work with requestors to examining whether the information sought can be prioritized thereby ensuring that the requester received the most pressing information first.

- Provide explanatory material where such material will clarify the personal information being received. In particular, when the personal information is outlined in reports that are generated by VAC electronic systems. This will reduce the requirement for follow up activities that can be time consuming for VAC ATIP resources.

Implement ATIP business process improvements

- Reduce the number of pages reviewed by eliminating duplicates and non-relevant records at the retrieval stage.

- Increase the processing consistency within the ATIP Office through use of documented processing expectations. This will ensure that extensions are consistently applied when appropriate and that files are consistently prioritized by officers.

- Increase follow up activities with various programs areas to ensure the timely retrieval of information that is responsive to requests.

Increase processing capacity

- The ATIP Office will examine increasing ATIP resources to address immediate compliance risks.

Increase awareness on privacy request processing

- The ATIP Office will deliver training activities related to clarifying roles and responsibilities in the request process. Such session will focus on the request process specifically and will help to build on the Department's efforts to raise awareness of privacy practices.

In addition to the above strategies, Veterans Affairs Canada will create a small team to review the ongoing challenges faced by the ATIP Office and to recommend solutions.

10. ACCESS TO INFORMATION TRAINING AND AWARENESS

Training

During the 2011-2012 fiscal year, Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP) related training was provided to over 233 staff at all levels in 25 sessions. While most of these training sessions focused on privacy, there were nevertheless key concepts related to access to information and information management that were covered as well. These sessions ensure that staff and managers understand their roles and responsibilities with respect to access to information, privacy, and information management. Since April 1, 2011, ATIP specialists have been involved in the delivery of the following sessions with a goal to enhance the knowledge, skills and perspectives of all employees, concerning ATIP, and Information Management.

- **Information Management at Work**

  This session includes a 90-minute presentation introducing main principles of ATIP and information management, and the related requirements and responsibilities of staff. The goal is provide participants with a basic understanding of the topics and recognize when they should contact a specialist for assistance. These regularly scheduled presentations are also presented to work teams upon request.

  There were 7 sessions delivered to more than 65 participants within Head Office and in the Regional Offices between April and December 2011.

- **Management and Supervision Orientation Program (MSOP)**

  MSOP develops VAC specific knowledge and enhances skills in people and financial management. Participants acquire knowledge to effectively analyze situations and develop innovative solutions. ATIP is one component of this week-long training program. MSOP sessions were delivered in May and September, 2011, as well as in January 2012. The three sessions were delivered to more than 45 new VAC managers and supervisors.

- **Student Sessions**

  Five sessions were delivered to summer students across the organization to advise them on their roles, responsibilities and requirements in relation to ATIP and Information Management. These sessions were delivered to 58 students over 5 sessions in June and July 2011.

Training within the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman

- During 2011-2012, the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman (OVO) delivered introductory Access to Information and Privacy Training to all OVO personnel in Ottawa, ON and Charlottetown, PE. The ATIP Unit within the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman also completed various introductory and detailed Access to Information and Privacy training sessions. There were 37 participants in total.

- During 2011-2012, the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman updated the Office's internal WIKI (available to all staff) to include information on Access to Information and Privacy, and the Office's internal processes and guidelines.

Awareness Activities

- The Duty to Assist Principles were posted to the VAC external website to support client awareness of the process for requesting personal information under the *Access to Information Act*.

- VAC also kept all staff informed of the activities and changes underway in the Department through the use of a number of articles in newsletters with an aim to improve ATIP and IM practices.

- The Information Management Services Directorate internal website (intranet) which currently also includes ATIP information, was updated to include new information, in an easily accessible format, relating to the resources and tools developed to support ATIP. For example, in March 2012, additional content on ATIP and Information Management was added to the Questions and Answers (Q&As) section on VAC's internal website to increase awareness.

11. POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

In the 2011-2012 fiscal year, VAC's focus was placed on developing and communicating policies, guidelines and processes. Again while much of the focus was on privacy, VAC did develop certain policies, guidelines, and processes that integrate elements relevant to access to information. As part of its Privacy Management Framework, VAC implemented in April 2011 the following instruments:

- Information Management Policy
- IM and Privacy Directive on E-mail
- Information Management Best Practices

The following processes were also implemented:

- Improvements to the OPI retrieval process including enhanced senior level accountability
- Integration of the Duty to Assist Principles with outgoing acknowledgement correspondence to requesters
- Improvements to the search estimate process

In addition to the above, VAC continued to work with departmental officials to ensure that the information holdings reported in *Info Source* are aligned with departmental programs and activities.

Office of the Veterans Ombudsman

- During 2011-212, the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman developed and circulated ATIP processes and guidelines and a Privacy-related Frequently Asked Questions (or FAQs) to all staff.

12. DESCRIPTIONS OF MAJOR CHANGES IMPLEMENTED

Veterans Affairs Canada

Review of ATIP Delegation Orders

- Also, during fiscal year 2011-2012, the Department initiated a review of the delegation orders under both the *Access to Information Act* and the *Privacy Act*. It is expected that the revised delegation orders will permit greater coordination of all *Access to Information Act (ATIA)* and *Privacy Acts (PA)* requests across the Department. The review was undertaken with the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman (OVO).

ATIP Director

- Until September 2011, the ATIP Coordinator function was one of two roles under the leadership of the Director Information Management. The union of these two roles brought together specialists who manage and protect the Portfolio's information holdings. In September 2011, a new Director position was created to focus solely on the *Access to Information Act* and the *Privacy Act* to strengthen the management focus on both roles. The ATIP Coordinator reports directly to the Assistant Deputy, Minister Human Resources and Corporate Services Branch.

Process Improvements

- Finally, the Department also introduced improvements to the retrieval process as well as to internal reporting on ATIP to enhance senior level awareness and accountability.

Office of the Veterans Ombudsman (OVO)

- During 2011-2012, the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman participated in consultation with Veterans Affairs Canada to establish Memorandum of Understanding related to *Access to Information Act* and *Privacy Act* roles and responsibilities, and to increase the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman's autonomy through modifications to the delegation instrument for Veterans Affairs Canada.

- Over this past year, the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman formed an ATIP Unit, developed a governance structure, and established roles and responsibilities in support of ATIP activities. The newly formed ATIP Unit developed high-level process documentation and internal processes and guidelines.

13. COMPLAINTS AND INVESTIGATIONS

- In 2011-2012, the Information Commissioner received 15 complaints against VAC and three (3) complaints were carried over from 2010-2011 for a total of 18 complaints. Nine (9) complaints comprising 60 percent of complaints received were from only a few individuals. This is similar to the situation being experienced with formal requests received where a small percentage of requests account for the bulk of the workload.

- Five (5) complaints received a ruling during the period and ten (10) have been carried over to 2012-2013.

- Of the complaints that received a ruling, one (1) was abandoned, three (3) were well founded and resolved, and one (1) was not well founded.

- Increased complaints present a significant challenge for the ATIP office as resources must be devoted to coordinate the process with officials from the Information Commissioner on a priority basis.

14. APPEALS TO THE COURTS

VAC has no appeals to the courts to report for the reporting period, April 1, 2011, to March 31, 2012.

Government of Canada / Gouvernement du Canada

Statistical Report on the *Access to Information Act*

Name of institution: Veterans Affairs Canada

Reporting period: 2011/04/01 to 2012/03/31

PART 1 – Requests under the *Access to Information Act*

1.1 Number of Requests

	Number of Requests
Received during reporting period	164
Outstanding from previous reporting period	68
Total	232
Closed during reporting period	143
Carried over to next reporting period	89

1.2 Sources of requests

Source	Number of Requests
Media	35
Academia	3
Business (Private Sector)	9
Organization	15
Public	102
Total	164

PART 2 – Requests closed during the reporting period

2.1 Disposition and completion time

Disposition of requests	Completion Time							
	1 to 15 days	16 to 30 days	31 to 60 days	61 to 120 days	121 to 180 days	181 to 365 days	More than 365 days	Total
All disclosed	3	16	6	5	2	3	0	35
Disclosed in part	0	8	4	4	7	9	7	39
All exempted	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
All excluded	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
No records exist	3	14	6	3	0	0	0	26
Request transferred	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
Request abandoned	6	2	3	12	2	3	3	31
Treated informally	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	21	41	21	24	11	15	10	143

TBS/SCT 350-62 (Rev. 2011/03) 1 Canada

2.2 Exemptions

Section	Number of requests	Section	Number of requests	Section	Number of requests	Section	Number of requests
13(1)(a)	0	16(2)(a)	0	18(a)	0	20.1	0
13(1)(b)	0	16(2)(b)	0	18(b)	0	20.2	0
13(1)(c)	0	16(2)(c)	2	18(c)	0	20.4	0
13(1)(d)	0	16(3)	0	18(d)	0	21(1)(a)	15
13(1)(e)	0	16.1(1)(a)	0	18.1(1)(a)	0	21(1)(b)	15
14(a)	4	16.1(1)(b)	0	18.1(1)(b)	0	21(1)(c)	9
14(b)	0	16.1(1)(c)	0	18.1(1)(c)	0	21(1)(d)	0
15(1) - I.A.*	0	16.1(1)(d)	0	18.1(1)(d)	0	22	0
15(1) - Def.*	0	16.2(1)	0	19(1)	36	22.1(1)	0
15(1) - S.A.*	0	16.3	0	20(1)(a)	0	23	9
16(1)(a)(i)	0	16.4(1)(a)	0	20(1)(b)	1	24(1)	1
16(1)(a)(ii)	0	16.4(1)(b)	0	20(1)(b.1)	0	26	0
16(1)(a)(iii)	0	16.5	0	20(1)(c)	2		
16(1)(b)	0	17	0	20(1)(d)	0		
16(1)(c)	0						
16(1)(d)	0						

* I.A.: International Affairs Def.: Defence of Canada S.A.: Subversive Activities

2.3 Exclusions

Section	Number of requests	Section	Number of requests	Section	Number of requests
68(a)	3	69(1)(a)	0	69(1)(g) re (a)	5
68(b)	0	69(1)(b)	0	69(1)(g) re (b)	0
68(c)	0	69(1)(c)	0	69(1)(g) re (c)	6
68.1	0	69(1)(d)	0	69(1)(g) re (d)	0
68.2(a)	0	69(1)(e)	2	69(1)(g) re (e)	4
68.2(b)	0	69(1)(f)	0	69(1)(g) re (f)	0
				69.1(1)	0

2.4 Format of information released

Disposition	Paper	Electronic	Other formats
All disclosed	35	0	0
Disclosed in part	37	2	0
Total	72	2	0

2.5 Complexity

2.5.1 Relevant pages processed and disclosed

Disposition of requests	Number of pages processed	Number of pages disclosed	Number of requests
All disclosed	2,616	2,544	35
Disclosed in part	15,953	13,360	39
All exempted	0	0	0
All excluded	132	0	3
Request abandoned	7,894	600	31

2.5.2 Relevant pages processed and disclosed by size of requests

Disposition	Less than 100 pages processed		101-500 pages processed		501-1000 pages processed		1001-5000 pages processed		More than 5000 pages processed	
	Number of requests	Pages disclosed	Number of requests	Pages disclosed	Number of requests	Pages disclosed	Number of requests	Pages disclosed	Number of requests	Pages disclosed
All disclosed	30	319	4	1,174	0	0	1	1051	0	0
Disclosed in part	26	719	12	3,121	0	0	0	0	1	9520
All exempted	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
All excluded	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Abandoned	26	0	3	600	0	0	2	0	0	0
Total	84	1038	20	4895	0	0	3	1051	1	9520

2.5.3 Other complexities

Disposition	Consultation required	Assessment of fees	Legal advice sought	Other	Total
All disclosed	4	2	0	0	6
Disclosed in part	14	1	2	0	17
All exempted	0	0	0	0	0
All excluded	0	0	0	0	0
Abandoned	2	2	0	0	4
Total	20	5	2	0	27

2.6 Deemed refusals

2.6.1 Reasons for not meeting statutory deadline

Number of requests closed past the statutory deadline	Principal Reason			
	Workload	External consultation	Internal consultation	Other
77	77	0	0	0

2.6.2 Number of days past deadline

Number of days past deadline	Number of requests past deadline where no extension was taken	Number of requests past deadline where an extension was taken	Total
1 to 15 days	13	3	16
16 to 30 days	6	1	7
31 to 60 days	4	1	5
61 to 120 days	22	3	25
121 to 180 days	9	1	10
181 to 365 days	6	4	10
More than 365 days	4	0	4
Total	64	13	77

2.7 Requests for translation

Translation Requests	Accepted	Refused	Total
English to French	0	0	0
French to English	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0

PART 3 – Extensions

3.1 Reasons for extensions and disposition of requests

Disposition of requests where an extension was taken	9(1)(a) Interference with operations	9(1)(b) Consultation		9(1)(c) Third party notice
		Section 69	Other	
All disclosed	0	0	2	0
Disclosed in part	0	1	7	0
All exempted	0	0	0	0
All excluded	0	0	0	0
No records exist	0	0	1	0
Request abandoned	0	0	6	0
Total	0	1	16	0

3.2 Length of extensions

Length of extensions	9(1)(a) Interference with operations	9(1)(b) Consultation		9(1)(c) Third party notice
		Section 69	Other	
30 days or less	0	0	7	0
31 to 60 days	0	0	3	0
61 to 120 days	0	1	6	0
121 to 180 days	0	0	0	0
181 to 365 days	0	0	0	0
365 days or more	0	0	0	0
Total	0	1	16	0

PART 4 – Fees

Fee Type	Fee Collected		Fee Waived or Refunded	
	Number of requests	Amount	Number of requests	Amount
Application	109	$545	23	$115
Search	1	$167	0	$0
Production	0	$0	0	$0
Programming	0	$0	0	$0
Preparation	0	$0	0	$0
Alternative format	0	$0	1	$56
Reproduction	0	$0	0	$0
Total	110	$712	24	$171

PART 5 – Consultations received from other institutions and organizations

5.1 Consultations received from other government institutions and organizations

Consultations	Other government institutions	Number of pages to review	Other organizations	Number of pages to review
Received during reporting period	49	2,102	0	0
Outstanding from the previous reporting period	1	6	0	0
Total	50	2108	0	0
Closed during the reporting period	46	2,063	0	0
Pending at the end of the reporting period	4	45	0	0

5.2 Recommendations and completion time for consultations received from other government institutions

Recommendation	Number of days required to complete consultation requests							
	1 to 15 days	16 to 30 days	31 to 60 days	61 to 120 days	121 to 180 days	181 to 365 days	than 365 days	Total
Disclose entirely	12	10	8	0	0	0	0	30
Disclose in part	2	3	4	1	0	0	0	10
Exempt entirely	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Exclude entirely	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Consult other institution	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	5
Total	16	16	13	1	0	0	0	46

5.3 Recommendations and completion time for consultations received from other organizations

Recommendation	Number of days required to complete consultation requests							
	1 to 15 days	16 to 30 days	31 to 60 days	61 to 120 days	121 to 180 days	181 to 365 days	than 365 days	Total
Disclose entirely	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Disclose in part	0	0	0	0	0	0		0
Exempt entirely	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Exclude entirely	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Consult other institution	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

PART 6 – Completion time of consultations on Cabinet confidences

Number of days	Number of responses received	Number of responses received past deadline
1 to 15	2	1
16 to 30	0	0
31 to 60	3	3
61 to 120	2	2
121 to 180	0	0
181 to 365	0	0
More than 365	0	0
Total	7	6

PART 7 – Resources related to the Access to Information Act

7.1 Costs

Expenditures		Amount
Salaries		$336,456
Overtime		$0
Goods and Services		$34,050
• Professional services contracts	$0	
• Other	$34,050	
Total		**$370,506**

7.2 Human Resources

Resources	Dedicated full-time to ATI activities	Dedicated part-time to ATI activities	Total
Full-time employees	4.88	1.50	6.38
Part-time and casual employees	0.00	0.00	0.00
Regional staff	0.00	0.00	0.00
Consultants and agency personnel	0.00	0.00	0.00
Students	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total	4.88	1.50	6.38

Annex 2 – Four-Year Statistical Analysis

	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	Variance 2011-2012 over 2010-2011
Requests received	95	138	148	164	11%
Requests carried forward from prior year	12	18	35	68	94%
Total requests	107	156	183	232	27%
Requests completed	89	121	114	143	25%
Requests from media	13	26	24	35	46%
Requests from business	5	8	18	9	-50%
Requests from the public	59	88	87	102	17%
Requests carried forward to next year	18	35	69	89	29%
Exemptions	52	101	111	94	-15%
Exclusions	6	16	31	20	35%
Completed in 30 days or under	73	88	69	62	-10%
Completed in 31 days or over	16	33	45	81	80%
Extensions	11	23	31	17	-45%
Total fees collected	$778.60	$748.40	$1312.00	$712.00	-46%
Application fees	$445.00	$595.00	$610.00	$545.00	-11%
Searching fees	$165.00	$0.00	$0.00	$167.00	100%
Reproduction of document fees	$168.00	$153.40	$702.00	$0	-100%
Fees waived	$75.00	$50.00	$40.00	$171.00	328%
Total costs for the administration of the ATI Act	$187,860	$204,530	$273,565	$370,506	35%
Salaries	$178,320	$196,960	$261,573	$336,456	29%
FTEs	3.26	3.03	3.85	6.38	66%
Administration costs (Operations and Maintenance)	$9,541	$7,570	$11,992	$34,050	184%
Informal requests	90	124	115	65	-43%
Consultations	20	56	43	49	14%
Complaints received	6	4	5	15	200%
Complaints ruled on	3	9	6	5	-17%

This publication can be made available upon request. For further information or to obtain additional copies please contact:

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